Augmentation of passenger amenities at stations is a continuous process and is undertaken through Annual Works Programme depending upon need, availability of funds.

Reduction in Travelling time of trains

1289. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the railways has studied ways to reduce the travelling time of trains plying between Trivandrum and Delhi and Chennai and Delhi;

(b) whether it is a fact that trains on above routes take long and circuitous routes and create major hardships for people of Tamil Nadu and Kerala;

(c) what steps are proposed to find long term solutions to create a better route for connecting Northern and Southern destinations; and

(d) in what way, the railways can find some short term solutions to reduce journey time on the North-South routes alongwith the details of the steps proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) Following trains running from New Delhi/Nizamuddin to Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) have been speeded up from 01.12.2006.

(1) 2625 Thiruvananthapuram-New Delhi Kerala Express by 145 minutes.

(2) 2626 New Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram Kerala Express by 60 minutes.

(3) 2643 Thiruvananthapuram-Nizamuddin Express by 110 minutes.

(4) 2644 Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram Express by 60 minutes.

(5) 2431 Thiruvananthapuram-Nizamuddin Rajdhani Express by 15 minutes.

(6) 2621 Chennai-New Delhi Tamil Nadu Express by 25 minutes.

Trains between New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram are running *via* two different major routes *viz* Ist route *via* Nagpur, Vijayawada, Coimbatore, Ernakulam and 2nd one *via* Vadodara, Madgaon, Ernakulam. 2625/2626 Thiruvananthapuram-New Delhi Kerala Express running *via* Ist route takes 50'05/51'20 hours and 2431/2432 Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram Express running *via* 2nd route takes 41'10"/42'20" hours.

Trains between New Delhi and Chennai are running *via* Nagpur and Vijayawada. 2621/2622 New Delhi-Chennai Tamil Nadu Express takes 33'/32'30" hours and 2611/2612 Nizamuddin-Chennai Garib Rath Express takes 28'10"/28'10" hours.

Closing of unmanned Level Crossings

1290. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has asked the Railways to file a status report on the proposal to close down all unmanned level crossings in the country to prevent accidents;

(b) if so, what are the total number of unmanned level crossings in the country at present, State-wise;

(c) whether mostly the accidents are occurring on these unmanned level crossings;

(d) if so, whether Government has accepted the Supreme Court's order in this regard; and

(e) if not, the main reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in their order dated 25.07.2007 have asked for status report on the following:

(i) Number of unmanned level crossings still to be manned out of 1018 unmanned level crossings identified for manning at Railways' cost.

(ii) The number of train tracks passing through the National/State Highways and whether there is any proposal under consideration of the respective State Governments and still is not co-operating with the railways for constructing the bridges.

Railway has filed the status report as per the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

(c) No, Sir. During April-October, 2007 only 45 unmanned level crossing accidents have taken place out of total number of 121 cosnequential rail accidents taken place during this period.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.

Increasing the Speed of New Delhi-Lucknow Shatabdi Express

1291. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry propose to increase the speed limit of New Delhi-Lucknow Shatabdi Express;

(b) if so, by when it is likely to be introduced; and

(c) whether testing of railway tracks has been completed in view of necessary security norms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Infrastructure *e.g.* tracks, signaling and rolling stock are being examined, thereafter speed will be increased.

Use of IT to boost revenue

1292. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Railways plan to make more use of information technology to boost revenue;

(b) if so, whether the Railways proposed to use IT in a big way during the Eleventh Five Year Plan;

(c) whether the Railways plan to use IT in four key areas, including freight operation information system, which would be extended to all the line, and

(d) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Use of information Technology is an on-going process. New projects are conceived depending on the requirements and commissioned from time to time Report of the sub group on "Research & Development & Information Technology including related networking/ telecom issues" has been finalized and included in the final report of Working Group on Railway Programmes for the Eleventh Five Year Plan.